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ABSTRACT

According to participants at Northern Illinois' Spring Colloquium on Adventure Education, adventure programs can spark enthusiasm, inspire vision, and bring to the level of consciousness the underlying questions of life and meaning. Such programs can prepare people to seek adventure safely and without damage to the environment and can be defined broadly enough to incorporate programs and experiences that lack physical risk. These three basic philosophies were considered of equal value by participants who responded to a questionnaire dealing with the philosophy, values and goals of Adventure Education and the value of the colloquium itself. Respondents felt that experiences of the nature presented at the colloquium belong in the public schools. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt prepared to take part in or lead adventure experiences. Those who felt well prepared considered adventure experiences as unique opportunities to develop one's potential and worth. They also felt the colloquium was well done and actually provided an opportunity to develop leadership skills. Those who did not feel well prepared tended to feel that the colloquium fell short of their expectations. Overall, however, participants indicated that the concerns of risk, liability and insurance were well covered and that the program provided an adequate rationale for adventure programs and enough actual outdoor experiences. (DS)

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TAFT CAMPUS OCCASIONAL PAPER NO. 26

SURVEY OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE 1975 ADVENTURE EDUCATION COLLOQUIUM

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SURVEY OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE 1975
ADVENTURE EDUCATION COLLOQUIUM

Introduction

For the past several years, the Department of Outdoor Teacher Education, Northern Illinois University, has held a Spring Colloquium. These meetings are designed to give Taft graduates an opportunity to explore new directions in Outdoor Education; to meet leaders in the field; to renew acquaintances with other students and faculty; and to exchange ideas. Each Colloquium has an underlying theme.

The May, 1975, Colloquium focused on Adventure Education - a field of Outdoor Education which is rapidly gaining in popularity.

The Colloquium covered two days - from Friday night through Sunday afternoon. Evening sessions were primarily held indoors. On Saturday, participants were given the option of attending two half day sessions or one full day session. A wide variety of topics and experiences was provided to accommodate a potentially wide array of interests.

As a part of preregistration, participants were asked to indicate which sessions they preferred to attend. They were then assigned to either first or second choices. An attempt was made to maintain balance in the sizes of the groups.

Numerous reasons exist for personal interest in Adventure Education. Expectations of Adventure Education programs also vary.

The Colloquium sponsors felt a need to assess the participants' expectations of Adventure programs as well as their evaluations of the Colloquium. This way, they would be in a better position to plan future programs and determine how their programming met participants' needs.

Questionnaire

A six page questionnaire was developed and given to participants. Questions focused on the philosophy, values, and goals of Adventure Education and a critique of it. All but three questions were based on a five point scale, with five points indicating agreement or approval through one point indicating disagreement or disapproval.

Two questions asked which experience was best and which was worst of those presented in the Colloquium. Another question asked respondents to rank order their reasons for attending the Colloquium. See Appendix, p. 9

Responses

Mean scores were computed for all questions and statements. All but one received mean scores of 3.0 or more, indicating agreement. Only question 42, which presented a negative critique of Adventure programs, received a mean score of less then 3.0. Since it was the only negative question, and the only one disagreed with, the general attitude of the respondents toward adventure was apparently positive.

Part A of the questionnaire presented several of the basic Philosophies of Adventure Education. Mean score responses to these statements ranged from 3.702 to 4.229, indicating agreement to strong agreement with all. Participants in the Colloquium espouse the basic philosophy of Adventure Education.

Part B presented the Values which proponents of Adventure programs believe can be gained from these programs. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt stated values were valid and the extent to which they actually experienced these benefits during the Colloquium. Mean scores for the validity of the statements ranged from 4.212 to 4.714, indicating that respondents believed that stated values of Adventure were valid. Mean scores for experiencing these values ranged from 3.741 to 4.381. Respondents generally felt that they had benefited from the experience, but not to the extent to which they felt they should have. Although they had positive experiences, they wanted more.

Part C addressed the Goals of Adventure Education. The first half of each question asked the degree to which Adventure Education should provide various experiences. Mean scores ranged from 3.607 to 4.786, indicating strong agreement with all goals. The second half of each question asked the degree to which the Colloquium actually provided the experience. Mean scores ranged from 3.107 to 4.459, indicating that the Colloquium did provide an opportunity to experience the indicated activities, although not to the extent to which participants felt it should. The lowest mean score was received by the second half of question 24, regarding living in a relatively unstructured setting away from people, places, and obligations.

Part D asked respondents to evaluate how well the sponsors informed them what to expect of the Colloquium and how well the Colloquium was run. Mean scores ranged from 3.086 (information regarding clothing and equipment) to 4.259 (provision of equipment by sponsors). The sponsors did a fair to good job of communicating, but could have communicated more clearly on some items.

Question 32 asked respondents which program experience gave them the clearest idea of what they were doing and why they were doing it, and was well conducted. Eighteen activities received at least one first choice; 15 people indicated that Paul Petzold's backpacking was the best experience.

Question 33 asked which was the least well conducted experience. A plurality of 16 responses indicated that none was poorly conducted; 6 of the experiences that were rated low by some were rated well conducted by others.

Question 35 asked respondents to rank order their reasons for attending the Colloquium. Twenty-eight respondents indicated that their main reason for attending was to meet and hear outstanding leaders in Adventure experiences; nineteen indicated that their major reason was to gain an understanding of what is meant by Adventure Experiences. These two choices received the highest and second highest mean scores, respectively.

Part E provided a Critique of Adventure Education. A variety of topics was addressed. Respondents tended to feel that the experiences presented at the Colloquium belong in our public schools; that the concerns of risk, liability, and insurance were adequately covered in the program; and that the program provided both an adequate rationale and background for Adventure programs and an adequate amount of actual outdoor experiences. Mean scores ranged from 3.387 to 4.442.

Respondents felt generally well prepared to gain support for Adventure programs in their schools (mean score 3.387); had personal commitments to play leadership roles in promoting Adventure programs (mean score 4.103); and felt that they possessed the necessary leadership abilities to develop and sustain Adventure programs in their own schools (mean score 3.573).

They also felt that the Colloquium provided them with a framework to overcome a lack of planning skills which is a problem in many Adventure programs (mean score 3.325).

They disagreed with the common criticism of Adventure programs that participants are usually physically oriented, so that the experience itself is an adequate rationale for having the program (mean score 2.766). This is the only item in the questionnaire which was disagreed with.

Statistical Analysis

Tests for statistically significant differences were run for several sets of questions. The 0.05 level (indicating that differences obtained would have occurred purely by chance only 5 times in 100) was accepted. Differences between mean responses were tested by t-tests.

Philosophies of Adventure Education

Responses to the Philosophies of Adventure Education were compared. No significant differences existed. Respondents assessed the three basic philosophies as being of equivalent value. They felt that Adventure programs can spark enthusiasm, inspire vision, and bring to the level of consciousness the deep and underlying questions of life and meaning and what is truly educational (1). They also felt that preparing people to seek Adventure safely and without damaging the environment is a valid goal of Adventure (3). Additionally, they felt that it is desirable to define Adventure in such a broad fashion so that any outdoor experience can be conceived of as holding a sense of adventure even if physical risk is almost completely lacking (5). The general acceptance of such a broad definition of adventure leads back to the semantics problems so troublesome in educational movements. If outdoor experiences without physical risks are conceived of as adventure, how does one differentiate between outdoor education and adventure education?

Expectations of Respondents and Provisions of the Colloquium

Matched sets of questions on Parts B and C asked respondents to indicate their expectations of Adventure programs and the extent to which they felt the Colloquium had met these expectations. Although mean scores for what the Colloquium actually provided were high, the differences between mean scores for expectations and experiences were significantly different for all items but one (23).

Part B presented the potential benefits which may be gained through Adventure Education. Respondents were asked whether they felt the values were valid and whether they experienced these values during the Colloquium.

Respondents felt that they derived significantly less benefit from the Colloquium than they felt Adventure programs should provide. See Table 1. This may be due in part to their already relatively high level of competence in Adventure experiences. Over 63 percent felt outstandingly well prepared to take part in Adventure activities. The program was of short duration and was essentially an introduction to adventure programs.

TABLE 1

VALUES EXPECTED OF ADVENTURE PROGRAMS
AND THOSE PROVIDED BY THE COLLOQUIUM

Items	t-scores	Levels of significance
6:7	6.99	0.000
8:9	5.78	0.000
10:11	5.00	0.000
12:13a	3.46	0.001
12:13b	6.07	0.000
12:13c	7.85	0.000

Part C presented the Goals of Adventure Education. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt certain goals were valid for Adventure programs and the extent to which the Colloquium actually provided them with opportunities to experience these goals.

In all but one question regarding the goals of Adventure Education, respondents felt that Adventure should provide more opportunities than the Colloquium actually provided.

However, the Colloquium experiences all received mean scores over 3.1; two of them received mean scores of 4.0 or more, indicating that although expectations were not met, the Colloquium did provide opportunities for new experiences.

It is possible that the Colloquium met the goals of Adventure Education as fully as can be expected within two days, but that all expectations of Adventure experiences could not be met during a weekend program.

The Colloquium was evaluated to have provided as much of an opportunity to temporarily escape from the demands of family, school, or work as Adventure experiences should provide (24). See Table 2.

TABLE 2

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WHAT ADVENTURE EDUCATION SHOULD PROVIDE AND WHAT THE COLLOQUIUM DID PROVIDE

Items	t-score	Level of significance
14a:14B	7.87	0.000
15a:15b	8.31	0.000
16a:16b	6.03	0.000
17a:17b	9.22	0.000
18a:18b	3.46	0.001
19a:19b	9.71	0.000
20a:20b	6.36	0.000
21a:21b	5.05	0.000
22a:22b	3.02	0.003
24a:24b	3.70	0.000
25a:25b	6.57	0.000

Responses of Those Who Did or Did Not Feel Prepared To Take Part in or Lead Adventure Activities

Question 34a and b asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they felt prepared to take part in and to lead Adventure experiences. Responses were grouped to form two groups - those who felt prepared and those who did not - for the analysis of the data. Those who checked 5 or 4 on a 5-point scale were placed into the well prepared group, and those who checked 2 or 1 were placed into the not well prepared group. Those who checked 3 (unsure) were eliminated. This was done only to compare responses of the well prepared and not well prepared groups. For all other data, all responses were used.

Responses of those who felt well prepared were compared to those who did not feel well prepared for all questions. Significant differences existed on six items for those who did or did not feel prepared to take part in and on seven items for those who did or did not feel well prepared to lead Adventure experiences.

Take part in Adventure experiences. Of the 80 respondents, 53 felt well or very well prepared to take part in Adventure experiences; 6 felt not well prepared.

Significant differences existed between the two groups for five items in Part B: Value of Adventure Education. No significant differences appeared in the groups' evaluations of the validity of values. Differences only appeared when respondents were asked the degree to which they actually experienced the values or benefits.

Those who felt well prepared to take part in Adventure activities experienced significantly greater personal benefits than those who felt not well qualified. They felt that Adventure can provide a unique opportunity to develop self confidence and a greater sense of one's own potentials and worth along with better communication between participants. A significant difference did not exist for only one statement: "I developed a greater sense of control over my own life." Those who did not feel well prepared did not feel they gained these personal benefits. Perhaps they need more time and experience before the values of Adventure programming are realized.

TABLE 3

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THOSE WHO FELT PREPARED
TO TAKE PART IN ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES
AND THOSE WHO DID NOT
ON THE VALUE
OF ADVENTURE EDUCATION

Item	t-score	Level of significance
7	2.255	0.013
9	2.62	0.011
13a	2.21	0.031
13b	2.36	0.022
13c	3.02	0.004

Significant differences also existed for one item in Part C: Goals of Adventure. Those who felt qualified to take part in Adventure activities were significantly more positive in their belief that the Colloquium actually provided them with an opportunity to develop their leadership skills than were those who did not feel well prepared (15b). See Table 4.

TABLE 4

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THOSE WHO FELT PREPARED
TO TAKE PART IN ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES
AND THOSE WHO DID NOT
ON THE GOALS
OF ADVENTURE EDUCATION

Item	t-score	Level of significance
15b	2.59	0.012

Lead Adventure experiences. Of the 80 respondents, 27 felt well or very well prepared to lead Adventure experiences; 21 felt not well prepared.

Significant differences existed between the two groups for four items in Part B: Value of Adventure Education.

Those who felt well prepared to lead Adventure experiences responded more positively to three of the six statements regarding the benefit gained personally by them (7, 9, and 13c) and to one of the questions regarding the benefits which they thought should be derived from Adventure experiences (10). They believed that they had developed a greater sense of self confidence (7) and of their own potentials and self worth (9). They also believe that Adventure experiences can help students to gain a greater sense of control over their own lives (10) and felt that they had personally experienced better communication with Taft Campus staff (13c). See Table 5. Well prepared individuals are stronger advocates of adventure programming.

TABLE 5

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THOSE WHO FELT PREPARED
TO LEAD ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES
AND THOSE WHO DID NOT
ON THE VALUE
OF ADVENTURE EDUCATION

Items	t-score	Level of significance
7	2.35	0.023
9	2.40	0.021
10	2.42	0.020
13c	2.24	0.030

A significant difference existed for one item on Part C: Goals of Adventure Education. Those who felt prepared to lead Adventure experiences felt that the Colloquium gave them the opportunity to gain a significantly higher level of social recognition than those who did not feel well prepared (25b). See Table 6.

TABLE 6

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THOSE WHO FELT PREPARED
TO LEAD ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES
AND THOSE WHO DID NOT
ON THE GOALS
OF ADVENTURE EDUCATION

Item	t-score	Level of significance
25b	2.53	0.015

Significant differences also existed for two items in Part E: Critique of Adventure Education. Those who felt prepared to lead Adventure experiences were significantly more willing to play leadership roles in promoting adventure programs (38) than those who did not feel well prepared. They also felt that they possessed more leadership abilities (39) than those who felt unqualified. See Table 7.

TABLE 7

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THOSE WHO FELT PREPARED
TO LEAD ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES
AND THOSE WHO DID NOT
ON THE CRITIQUE
OF ADVENTURE EDUCATION

Items	t-score	Level of significance
38	5.24	0.000
39	3.43	0.001

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The questionnaire revealed that participants in the 1975 Adventure Colloquium felt positively about the philosophies, values, and goals of Adventure Education.

They also were satisfied with the Colloquium itself. Despite this positive evaluation, a trend existed for the Colloquium to fall short of their expectations. It could be that the participants, a self-selected group, held expectations for the program which were too high. It might not be possible to meet all goals and expectations within the limited time framework of a single weekend program. Of course, attempts can be made to improve the quality of experiences to meet participants' expectations.

A trend existed for those who perceived of themselves as leaders to think the program was well done. It is likely that those leaders have more accurate perceptions of Adventure programs than those less well prepared, and will need to help others in interpreting and understanding the values of such experiences. The opposite is also a plausible explanation: leaders who are enthusiastic about Adventure programs fail to perceive their shortcomings as clearly as those not yet convinced.

Communication regarding plans, expectations, and evaluations before, during, and after a conference is essential to its success. Both sponsors and participants can benefit by clarifying in advance their plans and expectations for a conference like the Colloquium.

Sponsors would have to know clearly what they plan to present so that they could survey participants in advance for their expectation. They could then realistically plan to meet those expectations.

Participants must be aware of their particular preferences so that they can clearly communicate them to sponsors. Once they have revealed these preferences, they would be obligated to maintain them throughout the conference.

It would then be possible to sponsor a conference which would actually meet the expectations of participants to a greater degree.

Sponsors should make specific recommendations to participants regarding more advanced activities for them to pursue.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE*

MEANS

A. Philosophy of Adventure Education

Some advocates of Adventure experiences express their sense of what is valuable about such programs in the following way: They can spark enthusiasm, inspire vision, and bring to the level of consciousness the deep and underlying questions of life and meaning and what is truly educational.

4.229 1. To what degree do you feel this is a valid goal of Adventure programs?

2. (deleted)
Other advocates of Adventure experiences express their sense of what is valuable about such programs this way: "People want to seek adventure in the outdoors, but they are poorly prepared to live comfortably and safely without damaging the environment."

4.193 3. To what degree do you feel this is a valid goal of Adventure programs?

4. (deleted)
The assumption made regarding the Taft Colloquium on Adventure Education was that there are many kinds of experiences that are adventures to the students we serve - from nature games and creative playgrounds to rock climbing.

4.024 5. To what extent do you feel it is desirable to define Adventure experiences in such a broad fashion so that any outdoor experience can be conceived of as holding a sense of adventure even if physical risk is almost completely lacking?

B. Value of Adventure Education

Adventure programs are promoted in terms of the potential benefits to participants. Included are a number of statements regarding the values of Adventure programs. Two responses are requested. First, the degree to which you identify with or feel the values stated are valid. Second, the degree to which you yourself experienced these values.

6, 8, 10, 12. Students participating in Adventure experiences....

7, 9, 11, 13. I developed/experienced . . . . .

4.714
3.988 6, 7. . . have a unique opportunity to develop greater self confidence.

4.667
4.092 8, 9. . . can develop a greater sense of their own potentials and self worth.

4.212
3.741 10, 11. . . can gain a greater sense of control over their own lives.

4.667 12, 13. . . can achieve greater communication between themselves and other participants in the program.

4.381 13a. with other participants

4.145 13b. with workshop leaders

3.817 13c. with Taft Campus staff

C. Goals of Adventure

14a-25a. To what degree do you feel Adventure Education should provide an opportunity to. . . .

14b-25b. To what degree do you feel the Taft Colloquium provided you with an opportunity to. . . .

4.786;3.927 14. Learn new outdoor skills under realistic conditions?

4.488;3.518 15. Develop your leadership ability for Adventure experiences?

4.690;4.021 16. Explore some new and exciting environments?

4.694;3.536 17. Test and learn about yourself?

4.690;4.381 18. Share an exciting experience with other people of similar interests and ideas?

4.750;3.512 19. Learn about the conservation and ecology of Adventure settings?

4.471;3.583 20. Be physically challenged by experiences provided?

4.585;4.073 21. Have a personal feeling for the experiences provided?

4.718;4.459 22. Have an enjoyable experience?

4.071;4.000 23. Escape temporarily from the demands of family, school, or work?

3.607;3.107 24. Live in a relatively unstructured setting away from people, places and obligations?

3.815;3.237 25. Gain a degree of social recognition?

D. Colloquium Evaluation

The Colloquium is primarily environmed as a service to participants.

3.965 26. How clearly did we communicate what that service would be?

4.179 27. Did we provide a clear enough concept of the overall intent of the Colloquium for your purposes?

28. If no, what else did you need to know?

3.305 29. Did we provide you with sufficient information so that you had a clear sense of the nature of the activities in which you decided to participate?

3.086 30. Did we provide you with a sufficient degree of information regarding clothing and equipment necessary for your experiences?

4.259 31. Do you feel that the amount and quality of the equipment we provided was adequate for the activities conducted?

32. Indicate the program experience which you felt gave you the clearest idea of what you were doing, why it was being done, and was well conducted.

33. Indicate the program experience which you felt gave you the least idea of what you were doing, why you were doing it, and was not well conducted.

34. In terms of Adventure experiences and preparation, rank yourself as to how well you feel you are prepared to:

4.215 a. Participate in such activities.
3.154 b. Lead such activities.

35. Rank in order of preference the reasons why you attended this Colloquium:____ To renew acquaintances with graduates and graduate students in OTE. _____ To meet and hear outstanding leaders in adventure experiences. _____ To gain an understanding of what is meant by Adventure Experiences. _____ To try new adventure skills. _____ To improve existing Adventure skills. _____ To seek ideas on how to organize and conduct Adventure experiences. _____ Others (list).

E. Critique of Adventure Education

4.195 36. To what degree do you feel the kinds of activities discussed or demonstrated belong in our public schools?

3.378 37. To what degree do you feel the Colloquium has helped you articulate the learning goals of Adventure programs in a way that will help you gain the support of school administrators, school boards, and the tax paying public?

4.103 38. Adventure programs are known to place additional strains on the existing structure and organization of the public schools. To what degree do you feel a personal commitment to play a leadership role in promoting such programs?

3.573 39. Do you feel that you possess the energy, organizing ability, and charisma to convince parents, school boards, faculty, and students to find a way to develop and sustain an Adventure program within your schools?

4.442 40. Have the concerns of physical danger risks, liability, and insurance been adequately presented within this program?

3.325 41. A common problem in Adventure programming is the lack of planning skills among the faculty and administrators to conduct a successful program. To what degree has this workshop provided you with a planning framework to overcome this problem?

Another criticism of Adventure programs is that participants are physically oriented and seem to feel that just having the experience in itself is an adequate rationale. The emphasis is seen as being placed on experience for the sake of experience and that learning is incidental.

2.766 42. To what degree do you feel this is a valid criticism?

3.387 43. Do you feel that we provided an adequate amount of time developing rationales and guidelines for the development of Adventure programs?

3.922 44. Do you feel that we provided an adequate amount of actual outdoor experiences as opposed to just talking about outdoor adventures?

* Due to space limitations, only the essential elements of the questionnaire have been included. It should be noted that these are only the questions and statements which appeared in the questionnaire, not the entire instrument. Responses to all but questions 28, 32, 33, and 35 were on a 5-point scale with 5 points being positive and 1 point being negative. Numbers 28, 32, and 33 asked respondents to answer in their own words. Number 35 asked respondents to rank order a list of choices.

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